



**Board Meeting**  
**Russell Library Hubbard Room**  
**Wednesday, February 12, 2020**

**Present:** Trustees Atherton, Becker, Berlind, Fulton, Hadley, Nelson, Russell, Skowera, and Wisneski; Library Director Burkey; Assistant Director for Administrative Services Doyle; Staff Members Amy Slowik and Cate Tsahalís.

**Excused:** Trustee Duggan, Jones, Murdock

1. **Call to Order:** President Wisneski called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.
2. **Public Session/Comment:** There were no members of the public present.
3. **Approval of Minutes:** It was moved (Trustee Hadley) and seconded (Trustee Becker) to approve the minutes of the January 21, 2020 Board meeting. The motion passed unanimously.
4. **Administration Report – Ramona Burkey, Library Director**  
**GOAL 1: “A cohesive team of coworkers who buy into a shared vision of the future of the Russell Library, understand their roles in that future, and feel that their skills and abilities are fully utilized within the context of their daily work.”**

- Cate Tsahalís began work as our Executive Assistant on February 10 and was introduced to the board at the meeting.
- The department heads and I are currently piloting/beta-testing our new Performance Management system. It replaces the old-fashioned “checkbox” performance evaluation forms and replaces them with narrative goals and objectives written by employees and their supervisors. Our self-assessments and goals/objectives should always relate to the large mission and goals of the organization. In this way, Performance Management is a more meaningful process than just assigning a numerical score or checking off boxes, and keeps us all focused on the big picture.
- Five staff members and I will be attending the biannual Public Library Association conference, held this February 25-29 in Nashville, TN. For public librarians, the PLA conference is typically the most relevant and useful professional conference. We’re looking forward to some great ideas and team-building that week.
- Congratulations to Christy Billings, who has been selected to present at the **Libraries and Veterans National Forum** in College Station, TX this June! Only 50 participants from across the country were selected for this all-expenses-paid event, funded by the Institute for Museum and Library Services. Christy has done a phenomenal job over the last several years with our Veterans’ Writing Group, and she is now receiving well-deserved national recognition for her efforts and expertise.

**GOAL 2: “Groups and individuals think of the Russell Library as a driver of community connection, problem-solving and innovation, a transformer of lives, and a source for reliable, quality information.”**

- Upcoming events include “Long Journeys Home” with Connecticut’s State Archaeologist Nick Bellantoni; a discussion of Ann Patchett’s novel *Commonwealth* at Stubborn Beauty Brewing Company; a concert by Amy Gallatin and the Hot Flashes; and much more. Please visit our Events calendar at [russelllibrary.org](http://russelllibrary.org) for a full listing of events.

**GOAL 3: The Russell Library is a “destination”: A place of wonder and discovery that is welcoming and comfortable for all.**

- Please take a stroll through the Children’s Room to admire all of the new, fresh paint colors that have gone up! Kudos to Andres Ortiz from our Property Management department for his considerable skill and hard work on this project.

**GOAL 4: The Russell Library is a strong and sustainable organization.**

- Successful recent grant applications include the following:
  - \$5,000 in LSTA funding from the CT State Library for strategic planning
  - \$5,000 from the Community Foundation of Middlesex County for strategic planning
  - \$9,800 from CT Humanities for strategic planning
  - \$5,000 from the CT State Library for furnishings and equipment for the Children’s Room
- Community Connections, Meetings, Conferences Attended (does not include internal meetings with staff):
  - State Representative Quentin Phipps
  - Interviewed by WMRD/WLIS’ Don DeCesare
  - Story Bridge Steering Committee
  - NBC30 Interview by anchor Dan Corcoran
  - Middlesex United Way annual meeting (joined board)
  - Community Foundation of Middlesex County open house
  - Workshop: Projects Over \$100,000 (City Hall)
  - City Department Heads
  - CT State Library Construction Grant workshop
  - Middlesex Chamber of Commerce – Central Business Bureau monthly meeting
  - Middlesex Chamber of Commerce Breakfast
  - American Library Association Legislative Fly-In: Washington, D.C. (Offices scheduled to visit: Senators Blumenthal and Murphy; Representatives DeLauro and Hayes)
  - Mayor Florsheim, bimonthly meeting

5. **Old Business:** *Facilities assessment:* Library Director Burkey met with Mayor Florsheim and his chief of staff earlier on the 12<sup>th</sup>. It was agreed that library staff along with the city finance department will write an RFP seeking bids from architectural firms for carrying out the assessment. Trustee Skowera noted that the RFP should include an idea on how the assessment will be funded. The funding can be in a budget “wish list” or be made a CNR request.
6. **New Business:** *Update from Amy Slowik, Director of Borrowing and Discovery:* Slowik discussed the following activities that her department has been involved in recently:
  - Creating more inclusive circulation policies and procedures (i.e. pay-what-you-can until July 1st, giving patrons with temporary status regular-looking cards instead of bright yellow ones)
  - Streamlining signage and installing donation boxes at the circ desk.
  - Reducing paper use at the desk (only giving printed receipts upon request, streamlining procedures to use fewer forms)
  - Accepting credit cards at Circ, Info, and now for outreach.
  - Selling chocolate bars, totes, reusable bags, and water bottles at the desk for fundraising - we're in the process of installing shelves to display this and more merchandise for the future.
  - Circulating and charging mobile Hotspots, Launchpads, Wonderbooks, Playaways, and Book Packs.
  - Coordinating the big weeding project with many of our personnel helping selectors with pulling, withdrawing, and recycling materials.
  - Expanding our newsletter reach by making better use of our patron email database.

- Training new staff to help with cataloging (new materials get to patrons faster).
- Running reports to assess our patron database, collection usage, cost per circs for print vs. digital materials, and investigating Scholarly Stats to help make collecting and analyzing digital stats easier.

**7. Committee Reports and Recommendations:**

- a. Executive Committee Report: President Wisneski noted that the committee has not yet met but that a walk-through of the building is scheduled in preparation for the facilities assessment.
- b. Finance Committee Report:
  - i. Trustee Becker, Chair, reported that the committee had voted to recommend the FY 21 Russell Company budget to the full board for approval. Revenue will be down approximately \$16,000 due to the loss of fines. Some revenue will be recovered through gifts. There are increases in amounts for professional development, copying expenses, children's programming, and marketing and fundraising expenses. It was moved (Trustee Becker) and seconded (Trustee Nelson) to approve the FY 21 Russell Company budget. The motion passed unanimously.
  - ii. A list of recently awarded grants was circulated, and Finance Chair Becker congratulated staff for their hard work in securing the grants.
  - iii. Assistant Director for Administrative Services Doyle outlined plans for an annual appeal in conjunction with the 145<sup>th</sup> birthday of Russell Library to take place on Saturday April 4, 2020. There will be cake! She presented the event as the start of a build-up to the 150<sup>th</sup> birthday with a goal of securing at least 145 donations and getting patrons and library lovers accustomed to the idea of annual giving. Board members are asked to help by giving, supplying contact names, sharing social media posts, talking up the event and the good work being done by the library, helping to set up, run, and clean up the event. Ideas for event activities are welcome.
- c. Governance Committee Report: President Wisneski proposed the following as members of the Governance Committee: Trustees Skowera, Russell, Hadley, Fulton, and Murdock. Members of the Finance Committee include Trustees Becker, Berlind, Jones, Duggan, and former board member Kirkpatrick. The Executive Committee consists of the four officers (Atherton, Wisneski, Berlind, Becker) plus Trustee Nelson.
- d. Strategic planning: Chair Wisneski reported that the committee has met twice since the January board meeting and has discussed the preliminary community needs report from Maxine Bleiweis. A survey is out to library patrons and community members. Two subcommittees are being formed, one advisory with strategic planning committee members and community members, and one a work committee with board members and library staff. With an aggressive timeline, the committee hopes to have a final report by June, or certainly by September, of 2020.

- 8. Adjournment:** It was moved (Trustee Berlind) and seconded (Trustee Skowera) to adjourn at 8:40 p.m.. The motion passed unanimously.

**Next Regular Board meeting:** Tuesday, March 17, 2020, 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Wendy Berlind*  
Wendy Berlind, Secretary